
From: (b) (6)
Sent: Wednesday, January 29, 2014 6:24 PM

To: (b) (6)
Subject: RE: (b) (6) public access to EPA/CDC expertise

Dear (b) (6) – in response to your email:

Dear (b) (6),

Thank you for your email regarding transparency and media access, two issues the Environmental Protection Agency -- whose mission is rooted in science and dedicated to protecting public health and safeguarding the environment -- takes very seriously.

As with any emergency response, EPA's first priority is working with state and local officials to ensure the safety of the public. In the case of the (b) (6) chemical spill, the state's Department of Environmental Protection is the lead agency responsible for overseeing and coordinating the response activities. EPA has offered support and continues to work closely with the state and other federal and state agencies.

EPA began receiving and responding to media inquiries regarding the spill on January 10. Since then, we have responded directly and in a timely fashion to inquiries from more than two dozen media outlets, providing information on a wide range of issues, including the agency's role in the response, known information about the chemicals spilled, and EPA's regulatory authorities.

As we have throughout the spill response, EPA remains committed to transparency and helping reporters and the public understand the potential risks associated with the spill, the various roles of state, local and federal governments, as well as the role of the company involved, in responding to an environmental disaster.

Regards,

(b) (6)
Environmental Protection Agency
(b) (6)

(b) (6)
Office of the Administrator
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Office: (b) (6)

From: (b) (6)
Sent: Friday, January 24, 2014 11:00 AM
To: (b) (6)
Subject: FW: (b) (6) public access to EPA/CDC expertise

Dear (b) (6)

I received an auto reply from (b) (6) and am forwarding this on to you.

Best,

(b) (6)

From: (b) (6)

Sent: Friday, January 24, 2014 10:59 AM

To: (b) (6)

Cc: (b) (6)

public access to EPA/CDC expertise

Dear (b) (6) :

Please see attached a letter from two dozen (b) (6) scientists expressing concerns about continuing problems with access to agency experts, particularly during the state's current water crisis but also more generally. Soon, the letter will be live on the website of the (b) (6) along with a press release (reproduced below) and a blog post. The relevant URLs are as follows:

The letter: (b) (6)

My blog post (b) (6)

Press release: (b) (6)

We would welcome a response from each of your agencies (which we would share with the scientists and make public), as well as the opportunity to discuss these issues at greater length with those who are responsible for public affairs and scientific integrity in a conversation to better understand your concerns.

In addition, we are aware that the (b) (6) have sent a similar letter, and that in a response CDC Public Affairs Director (b) (6) expressed a commitment to examining how information and expertise could be made available to the public in a more timely manner. We would also welcome the opportunity to have input into that examination.

Please let me know if you have any questions; if I don't hear back I'll follow up with you at a later date.

Best Regards,

(b) (6)

(b) (6)

Follow me on Twitter (b) (6)

(b) (6) SCIENTISTS CALL ON FEDERAL SCIENCE AGENCIES TO STOP BLOCKING INFORMATION REQUESTS ON CHEMICAL SPILL

WASHINGTON (January 24, 2014) – Twenty-four (b) (6) scientists sent [a public letter](#) today to the heads of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), calling on the agencies to allow scientists to speak freely regarding the recent (b) (6) chemical spill and other public concerns. Since the spill, federal and state agencies have released sometimes [confusing and contradictory recommendations](#) to the public regarding water safety.

“Your agencies have repeatedly failed to adequately respond to questions from the public and the press,” the letter says. “We deserve to be told what is known--and what is not known-- about the risks the chemical poses to human health as the disaster unfolds. If the government had been more forthcoming about what is not known about the leaked chemicals, citizens and local officials would have been able to make better choices about the actions needed to protect their families and communities.”

They conclude by calling on the administrators to “update your policies and practices to allow unfettered access to the scientists whose expertise can help prevent illness and injury.”

The (b) (6), which organized the letter, tracks scientific integrity and media policies at federal agencies. Despite public commitments to transparency and internal policies that generally affirm scientists’ right to speak freely to the press, scientists at both agencies are often discouraged or prevented from speaking openly and publicly, especially on high visibility issues. At EPA, for example, reporters are often asked to submit questions to scientists in advance, and public affairs officials approve answers before they are released.

(b) (6), a program manager for the center, has written [a blog post](#) highlighting the importance of putting well-intentioned policies into action. “In times of emergencies, especially when the public health and safety may be at risk it is essential that we let scientists speak,” he writes. “In situations like these, accurate and timely information needs to get to the public and allowing scientists to speak to the media without prior clearance from public affairs or other officials can allow for more comprehensive information to reach those who need it. Public affairs officers can play a coordinating role and can be informed of scientists’ communication to the media and public, but they should not act as gatekeepers that compromise our ability to understand the threats that citizens face.”

Earlier this week, the (b) (6) also [sent a letter](#) to the CDC and EPA

calling for greater access to scientists and officials. The CDC's public affairs directed [responded](#) and committed to examining their processes to better respond to requests for information.

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The (b) (6) puts rigorous, independent science to work to solve our planet's most pressing problems. Joining with citizens across the country, we combine technical analysis and effective advocacy to create innovative, practical solutions for a healthy, safe, and sustainable future. For more information, go to (b) (6)